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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report describes the activities of the United Nations system in providing electoral support to Member States over the past two years. The United Nations continues, by mandate and experience, to promote the principle periodic and genuine elections at a time when it is high on the international agenda. The mandate of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities, is to ensure organizational coherence and political and technical consistency in all United Nations electoral activities. The focal point is supported in these functions by the Electoral Assistance Division, which is required to maintain a roster of electoral experts and the electoral institutional memory of the United Nations.

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** The present report was delayed owing to the need to reflect information provided by a variety of sources.



In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, assistance is generally provided through the electoral components of the missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or through the special political missions managed by the Department of Political Affairs. The Electoral Assistance Division assists these missions in designing and staffing the electoral component and provides technical guidance, as required. The United Nations Development Programme increasingly helps countries develop national capacity for professional electoral management and frameworks for inclusive electoral participation over a sustained period. A growing number of United Nations departments, programmes and agencies are providing components of electoral assistance, as are intergovernmental organizations and numerous non-governmental actors.

United Nations electoral assistance is provided only at the request of a Member State or on the basis of a resolution of the Security Council or the General Assembly. Since 1992, the United Nations has received 406 requests from 107 Member States. During the reporting period, the United Nations provided electoral assistance to 43 Member States.

Over the years, a number of trends have emerged. Demand from Member States for electoral assistance continues to be high, and initial scepticism that such assistance might encroach on national sovereignty has gradually diminished. Requests to organize or observe elections have decreased substantially; technical advice and assistance to electoral authorities and other institutions is the norm. The complexity of requests, including for technological innovations, is increasing. A growing number of projects are focused on local elections, which can be technically and politically more complex, and more costly, than national elections. There is an increasing realization that building capacity to organize credible elections may require assistance over a sustained period. Finally, successful elections require credible and transparent technical operations as well as the commitment of political actors to creating the appropriate environment to ensure acceptance of results and government formation in a peaceful atmosphere.

In its years of experience in this field, the United Nations has developed practices that have proven effective. The Organization must continue, however, to adjust its practices to meet emerging trends and challenges. The present report presents a series of recommendations to ensure the continued strengthening of the role of the United Nations in supporting Member States to conduct credible, periodic and genuine elections.

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in conformity with General Assembly resolution 60/162 and covers electoral activities undertaken by the United Nations since the previous report on this subject (A/60/431).
2. When the United Nations began to provide electoral assistance, there was some scepticism that its efforts might encroach on national sovereignty or impose a single model of democracy. This concern has gradually diminished. Notably, there has never been an objection regarding interference in the internal affairs of a Member State.
3. Over the past 15 years the United Nations has assisted 107 Member States in the conduct of elections. The first request for United Nations electoral assistance was received in 1989. Several Member States have requested assistance more than once. As of August 2007, the United Nations had received 406 requests for electoral assistance. During the reporting period, the United Nations provided electoral assistance to 43 Member States. In 10 cases, assistance was based on a Security Council mandate. Selected examples of electoral assistance are listed in the annex to the present report.
4. The report underscores efforts to strengthen partnerships with others involved in electoral assistance. It identifies a number of trends and challenges to which the United Nations must respond in order to ensure the coherent and effective delivery of electoral assistance. It points to a number of resource issues that have an impact on the delivery of electoral assistance. Finally, it makes a series of recommendations for the improvement and strategic development of United Nations electoral assistance to Member States.

II. United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

A. Cooperation within the United Nations system

5. Increasingly, the efforts of the United Nations to assist Member States in conducting credible, periodic and genuine elections require a system-wide approach. The mandate of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities (hereafter the focal point), is to ensure organizational coherence and political and technical consistency in all United Nations electoral activities. The focal point is supported in these functions by the Electoral Assistance Division, which is required to maintain a roster of electoral experts and the Organization's electoral institutional memory.
6. In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, assistance is generally provided through electoral components of field missions under the aegis of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or through special political missions managed by the Department of Political Affairs. The Division assists with the design and staffing of the electoral component, the latter through its roster of electoral experts, with technical guidance as required. Such assistance, for example, is presently given to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for

Iraq (UNAMI). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helps countries develop national capacity for professional electoral management and frameworks for inclusive participation over a sustained period. Other United Nations departments, programmes and agencies are also involved in electoral assistance, including the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Volunteers programme and the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS).

7. The current reporting period provided an opportunity to review and assess the mandate, functions and resources of the Electoral Assistance Division. In that regard, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an in-depth evaluation of the Division's work and made useful recommendations (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1), which the Division has begun to implement.

8. The Division has been restructured, at no cost, to better address today's needs and demands. It is now working to strengthen its strategic partnerships and to promote improved consultation among partners while increasing its capacity to advise on cross-cutting electoral policy issues, in particular those that would further conflict prevention objectives. Additionally, the Division has begun to focus on developing its unique institutional memory in order to share its knowledge and experience more effectively with Member States and partners. The Division will also play a more active role in advocating international standards in the provision of electoral assistance. As a corollary, the terms of reference of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation have been revised in order to ensure consistency with the functions of the Division.

9. UNDP is the Organization's major implementing body for long-term electoral support outside the peacekeeping or post-conflict environment. It manages some 40 to 50 field-based electoral projects per year. Over the past several years, its approach has shifted to focus support on electoral cycles rather than specific elections. This allows for better advance planning and larger, multi-year assistance programmes that focus on electoral reform and capacity development. In addition to its field-based activities, UNDP continues to produce important analysis on election-related issues. In 2006, UNDP published the results of a "Global survey on the cost of registration and elections", the first comprehensive international analysis of election costs. By highlighting best practices in election management and administration, the survey offers valuable suggestions for reducing costs while maintaining the integrity of elections.

10. The United Nations Democracy Fund has received financial support from 30 Member States from all regions. Its Board specifically invited civil society organizations and United Nations entities to submit project proposals. The Board recommended 125 projects, of which 28 per cent were related to civic education, elections and political parties. This thematic area received the greatest amount of funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund. A total of 35 election-related projects were approved, all vetted by the Electoral Assistance Division and, as necessary, endorsed by the focal point.

11. OHCHR continues to provide advice on human rights aspects of elections. For example, the OHCHR subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé, Cameroon, is supporting democratization processes in the 11 countries of the region. Most recently, the Centre organized a meeting of key

civil society organizations to discuss a plan of action for involving civil society in public sensitization campaigns regarding electoral rights. In Timor-Leste, OHCHR provides substantive and methodological support to the Human Rights and Transitional Justice Section of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), including monitoring polling stations in order to ensure that vulnerable voters (those in detention, in hospitals and internally displaced persons) were able to vote. Such monitoring also helped to prevent recurrent cases of intimidation and other human rights violations.

12. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is collaborating with seven institutional partners (including the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP) in maintaining and expanding ACE. The Electoral Knowledge Network (see <http://aceproject.org>) (formerly the Administration and Cost of Elections project).

13. The United Nations Volunteers programme provides critical staffing for electoral missions, often within very short time frames. In 2006 some 445 volunteers provided support to six electoral missions. As at 31 July 2007, a total of 576 volunteers were serving in seven electoral missions, five of which are continuing from 2006. United Nations volunteers are currently engaged in missions in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Togo.

14. The United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) provides project support for electoral activities in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP and Member States. Prominent among these were UNOPS electoral support services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Iraq. UNOPS coordinated international electoral observers for the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in July and October 2006. For the elections in Haiti in February 2006, UNOPS provided services to the Provisional Electoral Council, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Organization of American States (OAS). Building on its earlier work in Iraq, UNOPS assisted the national electoral commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) with the planning and implementation of logistics for the October 2006 referendum and December elections.

B. Cooperation with other organizations

15. The United Nations continues to establish and strengthen its relations with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved in electoral assistance. In this context, the Organization is often expected to contribute to the development and dissemination of electoral best practices. For example, the Secretary-General signed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Observers in October 2005. Since then, the Declaration has been endorsed by over 30 organizations, all of which have committed to the standards established in the Declaration for professional, impartial and effective observation. In order to build on and broaden support for the Declaration, the endorsing organizations plan to meet annually on a rotating basis, with OAS organizing the next meeting in November 2007.

16. In addition to its work with the European Union, OAS, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others, the United Nations has

established an ongoing dialogue with the African Union, which has requested support as it develops its Electoral Unit.

17. The United Nations continues to work with partners on ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network and the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections project, two electoral knowledge tools with global reach. The latter project is a modular training package for building electoral administration capacity. Originally developed in East Timor during 2001-2002, the project is a cooperative effort of the Australian Electoral Commission, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IFES (formerly the International Foundation for Election Systems), the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP. A new and expanded version of the project is currently being developed. It has been used to train electoral administrators worldwide. The ACE network provides web-based information on election administration and includes IFES, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Instituto Federal Electoral of Mexico, Elections Canada, UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa as partners. Most recently, the Electoral Assistance Division joined the partnership, formalizing its membership in March 2007. The ACE network is supported through contributions from its partners, the United Nations Democracy Fund and the European Commission.

18. The United Nations was a member of the steering committee for the planning and organization of the fourth Global Electoral Organization Conference, which took place in March 2007 in Washington, D.C., coordinated by IFES. The conference brought together electoral associations and experts from over 50 countries. Participants discussed a wide variety of issues, including electronic voting and the establishment of election management training centres.

C. Elections and gender

19. In recognition of the importance of gender equality in all aspects of public and political life, the United Nations continues to promote women's participation in elections as voters, candidates and administrators. Since 2006, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has organized four national civil society consultations in order to enhance the role of women — in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Liberia. Based on these meetings, the Department and the Electoral Assistance Division are jointly preparing guidelines on enhancing the role of women in post-conflict electoral processes. The United Nations Democracy Fund, UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have sponsored a variety of projects. In Africa, for example, the United Nations Democracy Fund awarded UNIFEM and the InterPress Service a grant to improve press coverage of women candidates running for office in 11 African countries. For the 2007 elections in Timor-Leste, UNDP and UNIFEM carried out a project in support of women candidates.

20. The United Nations pays particular attention to gender balance in the staffing of its field missions; in some electoral components female staffing is higher than 50 per cent. The Chief Electoral Officer in two of the Organization's largest missions (UNAMI and the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)) are female. The number of women on the electoral expert roster is currently 30 per cent, and efforts are under way to increase that number significantly.

III. Trends in electoral assistance

21. The experience gained over the past two years has highlighted several emerging trends in the field of electoral assistance. Several of these reflect changes in the nature of requests from Member States. Others relate to United Nations priorities, including gender mainstreaming and efforts to support political inclusiveness.

22. The United Nations continues to receive requests for assistance to local elections. The Organization has tended to respond positively to such requests, recognizing, among other things, that local elections help generate a broad base for national democracy. They are, however, more complex and costly than presidential and parliamentary elections, often diverting financial and political resources from national elections.

23. Electoral assistance is becoming more complex. Some Member States are considering the introduction of electronic voter registration, voting and results aggregation systems into their electoral processes. It is essential that such new systems match available national capacity, thus allowing for sustainability over time. The United Nations must continue to enhance its own advisory and technical capacity in order to assist Member States in these issues.

24. Over time, the types of assistance requested of the United Nations have evolved. The Organization now rarely observes elections whereas, in contrast, regional organizations tend to be increasing their activities in this area. Most United Nations assistance entails technical advice and capacity-building during an electoral period and within a longer-term development framework. The Organization has generally maintained the practice of not observing elections to which it is providing technical assistance, so as not to be in the position of evaluating its own efforts.

25. The United Nations has been asked in specific instances to certify the results of elections, most recently in Timor-Leste. This is a form of assistance provided by the Organization that should be examined and reviewed in the light of United Nations experience to date.

26. There is an increasing realization that building the capacity of national institutions so they can organize credible elections may require assistance over a sustained period.

27. Too often, the technical successes of elections are overshadowed by political discord or violence, especially after results are announced or during efforts to form a government. Particularly in post-conflict environments, the United Nations and others have often been called upon to assist national authorities in creating an appropriate post-electoral environment in order to ensure acceptance of results and government formation in a peaceful atmosphere.

IV. United Nations resources for electoral assistance

28. Given the continuing demand for electoral assistance and the increasing diversity and complexity of assistance, the need for appropriate human and financial resources has grown. OIOS recognized this trend in conducting its 2006 evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Division. In its 2007 report, OIOS made two specific recommendations related to the Division's resources: the roster of electoral experts

should be converted to an electronic format for easier use; and the guidelines of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation should be reviewed and revised to better match the Division's activities.

29. Regarding human resources, the roster of electoral experts is the primary source of expertise for staffing electoral missions carried out by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP. In the last two years, over 600 elections experts from more than 35 countries were drawn from the roster to staff electoral missions or projects. The roster contains the names of approximately 1,200 individuals with a range of expertise that includes election administration, electoral law, electoral systems, logistics, voter education, training, boundary definition, information technology and voter registration. Efforts continue to increase the roster's gender balance, geographical representation and language capabilities.

30. In May 2007, following the recommendations of OIOS, the Electoral Division undertook a comprehensive assessment of the roster and sought options for its conversion to a computerized system. Recommendations are now under consideration. In the long term, the conversion will increase efficiency, facilitate the roster's expansion and decrease the time between the selection of experts and deployment. This process, which will increase the complexity of work for the managers of the roster, will require additional staff.

31. Regarding financial resources, the United Nations system has several sources of extrabudgetary funding for electoral assistance activities, which is critical for their effectiveness given that the timing, duration and complexity of requests are often unpredictable. The primary sources of funding within the United Nations system have been the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation and the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. The newest source of financial support is the United Nations Democracy Fund. The costs of electoral components of peacekeeping missions are covered by assessed contributions for the particular missions. The majority of resources for UNDP electoral assistance projects are mobilized from donors and government cost-sharing at the country level.

32. The United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation was established by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 46/137. Its terms of reference reflected the primary activities of the Electoral Assistance Division at that time, focusing primarily on the need for funds to cover the costs of electoral verification missions and coordination and support for other international observers. Over the past 15 years, however, the nature of requests for electoral assistance has changed considerably, and the United Nations, as noted earlier, now rarely undertakes election observation.

33. In keeping with the changes in demands from Member States, OIOS recommended that the Fund's terms of reference be reviewed. As a result, the Secretary-General approved the revision of both the title and terms of reference of the Fund, which is now the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance. The Fund will continue to be administered by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in his capacity as the focal point. As in the past, the Fund will consist of voluntary contributions with no financial implications for the regular budget.

34. The Fund is currently close to depletion, and Member States are called on to consider making contributions, which may be earmarked, if required. Improved donor relations and resource mobilization have been identified as important activities of the restructured Division and will be coordinated with the overall strategy for donor relations of the Department of Political Affairs.

35. The UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund is one of the primary sources for funding for UNDP electoral assistance activities. In shifting its focus from election event to electoral process and management support, UNDP is now able to undertake multi-year planning rather than mobilizing funds for specific election activities. The trust fund has been useful primarily in helping UNDP country offices to undertake projects related to specific issues such as the role of women in electoral and political processes, political party support and enhancing participation of vulnerable groups.

36. The United Nations Democracy Fund, the newest source of funding for electoral assistance activities, first distributed grants in 2006. Since the Fund's Board sought to identify project activities not already supported by other funding sources, special efforts were made to solicit proposals from locally based civil society organizations and the United Nations system. The Fund is a modest but accessible source of funding for innovative interventions in electoral assistance.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

37. As evidenced by the continuing high demand, the United Nations has developed practices over the years that have proven effective in assisting Member States to conduct credible, periodic and genuine elections. The Organization must, however, continue to make adjustments in its practices in order to meet emerging trends and challenges.

38. The multiplicity of actors within the United Nations can enhance effectiveness through application of comparative advantages and increased specialization. However, it means more attention must be paid to system-wide coherence and consistency. In this regard the role of the focal point for electoral assistance activities should be re-emphasized. At the same time, efforts to define the division of labour within the United Nations family more clearly should be continued.

39. To meet the growing demand for complex electoral assistance, the United Nations should increase its capacity both to develop and disseminate electoral standards and best practices and to ensure that its knowledge management systems are sufficient to meet that demand. In so doing, the Organization should continue to work in partnership with relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations and other partners. The focal point will endeavour to ensure that technical and policy advice is consistent throughout the Organization. Improved monitoring and evaluation of electoral assistance will further hone the service provided to Member States and should form a fundamental part of the response to requests for assistance.

40. It is often unrealistic, especially in post-conflict environments, to expect that effective and independent electoral institutions and inclusive electoral processes can be built on the basis of assistance to one election. A cyclical approach to electoral assistance will help ensure sustainability. The success of this approach also depends,

to some extent, on donors maintaining interest in electoral assistance through local elections and between elections, recognizing of course that the primary responsibility for funding and supporting electoral institutions and processes lies with the Member State itself.

41. The United Nations is often, especially in line with Security Council mandates, called upon to deliver electoral assistance in the context of tight time frames and difficult logistical circumstances. However, not all of the Organization's procedures are designed for the necessary speed and flexibility. The focal point will, in consultation with relevant departments and agencies of the United Nations, make recommendations as to how best to meet these challenges, within the framework of ongoing reform efforts.

42. Recognizing the recent trend of requests for the United Nations to certify the results of elections, the focal point will undertake, with relevant departments and agencies, a lessons learned exercise on how this mandate can best be implemented.

43. The Organization must continue to define support to programmes that encourage participation of women in electoral processes as a priority. It must also strengthen its capacity to offer Member States advice on the choice of electoral systems, which can be particularly important in encouraging inclusiveness in post-conflict settings.

44. The need for appropriate human and financial resources will grow with continuing demand and increasing complexity of electoral assistance. The roster of electoral experts is now being converted to an electronic format in order to enhance its accessibility and diversity. As the number of experts increase in the roster, additional human resources will be needed to maintain it. The terms of reference for the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance have now been revised to better match the activities of the Electoral Assistance Division, in accordance with the recommendations of OIOS. However, since the Fund continues to be funded from voluntary contributions, and is currently close to depletion, I encourage Member States to consider making voluntary contributions for electoral assistance, which can be earmarked, to the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and the United Nations Democracy Fund.

45. Finally, it should be recognized that successful elections require not just credible and transparent technical operations, but also responsibility on the part of political participants. Too often, the technical successes of elections are overshadowed by political discord or violence, especially after results are announced or during efforts to form government. I hope to work with Member States to address these challenges in order to help ensure that the promise of genuine and periodic elections can be fully realized.

Annex

Examples of United Nations electoral assistance during reporting period

Special political missions

Iraq

1. In 2005 the United Nations provided substantial operational and technical assistance to the Iraq election commission in the conduct of three election events. A new permanent electoral commission, the Independent High Electoral Commission, was appointed in early 2007. The Commission requested continued United Nations technical support in May 2007. The Organization leads the International Electoral Assistance Team, which currently includes partner organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), IFES and an Italian non-governmental organization, *Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna*. The team is the interface for all election assistance to the Commission, with the United Nations taking the lead on election policy, legal reform and capacity-building.

Nepal

2. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was established as a special political mission of the Department of Political Affairs in early 2007. The mission is mandated, inter alia, to provide technical support for the conduct of the election for a constituent assembly and to provide a small team of electoral experts to monitor and certify the electoral process. The Electoral Assistance Division is supporting the operations of the Electoral Assistance Office at UNMIN. Electoral expertise has focused on assisting development of the legal framework and procedures, as well as voter education, updating of the voter rolls and logistics. Elections, originally scheduled for June 2007, are now scheduled to take place in November 2007.

The occupied Palestinian territory

3. Since 2005 a technical adviser on elections has been embedded in the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to assist and advise the Palestinian Central Election Commission. A United Nations Liaison and Support Unit was established with contributions from bilateral donors for the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006. The Unit disseminated electoral information and provided liaison, exclusively for accreditation purposes, between international observers, the Palestinian Central Election Commission and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Unit did not observe the electoral process, but facilitated accreditation of 78 delegations consisting of 1,065 observers from 38 countries.

Peacekeeping operations

Afghanistan

4. Parliamentary elections held in Afghanistan in 2005 completed the first cycle of elections under the 2004 Constitution. As part of the integrated United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP currently assists the Government in strengthening electoral capacity. The Afghanistan Compact calls for the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission to be able to administer elections by the end of 2008. However, resources are unavailable to sustain the mid- to long-term capacity of the electoral institutions. The next elections in Afghanistan are scheduled for 2009. Aside from capacity-building, UNDP is also undertaking a pilot project to create a civil-voter register using funds provided by the United Nations Democracy Fund.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

5. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) was mandated to assist with the preparation and conduct of elections during the transitional period. The MONUC Electoral Division, in close cooperation with the UNDP-managed *Project d'appui au processus électoral en République Démocratique du Congo* (APEC), undertook the largest electoral assistance programme ever conducted by the United Nations. The Electoral Assistance Division supported the MONUC Electoral Division with operational planning for the July and October 2006 elections. The integrated MONUC/APEC technical assistance team worked directly with the Congolese Independent Electoral Commission.

6. In December 2005, the Independent Electoral Commission organized the constitutional referendum, after which a new constitution was promulgated. Following this, the Commission held the first round of presidential and National Assembly elections in July 2006. A second round of presidential elections, held in October 2006, was praised by international observers, the press and several world leaders. MONUC continued to support the Commission during the senatorial elections in January 2007 and the elections for governor and vice-governor in February 2007. MONUC will maintain its assistance during preparations for local elections, anticipated in 2008, and will contribute towards the creation of a new election commission.

Haiti

7. Mandated by the Security Council, the Electoral Assistance Division supported electoral processes in Haiti through the Electoral Assistance Section of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), established in coordination with UNDP. Logistical and technical assistance was provided to the Haitian authorities for the presidential and legislative elections in February and April 2006 and for the municipal and local elections in December 2006 and April 2007. Support continues to be provided for the senatorial elections due in November 2007. After consultations with its partners, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the Electoral Assistance Division has proposed a gradual transition to long-term country support, with the maintenance of a smaller MINUSTAH electoral unit, in order to focus on constitutional and electoral law reform.

Liberia

8. The Electoral Division of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) closed officially in September 2006 and handed over its responsibilities to UNDP. The residual UNMIL Electoral Division assisted the Liberian National Elections

Commission with the conduct of by-elections, capacity-building and institutional restructuring of the election commission. A joint mission from the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP visited Liberia in mid-February 2007. The mission recommended that UNDP develop a project of assistance that focuses on continued capacity-building of the Elections Commission. The Mission also recommended that UNDP assistance focus on both local and national elections scheduled for 2011.

Sierra Leone

9. The United Nations provided policy, technical and financial support for the August 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, and helped to build the capacity of the National Electoral Commission. A successful voter registration process resulted in the registration of some 2.8 million voters, or approximately 91 per cent of the eligible voting population. Voter turnout for the elections was high, and initial observer reports suggest that the elections, organized by the National Electoral Commission with United Nations technical assistance, were conducted satisfactorily.

Sudan

10. Although national elections are scheduled for the end of 2009, the electoral calendar has been significantly delayed. Several key activities are yet to commence, including a population census, adoption of the elections law and the establishment of the Electoral Commission. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) has a small electoral unit that works closely with the parties to create necessary political space and move the electoral process forward.

Timor-Leste

11. Presidential elections took place in April and May 2007, and parliamentary elections in June 2007. The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), through its Electoral Assistance Office, provided key legal advice and support for the drafting of electoral regulations, procedures and codes of conduct. UNMIT support, and that provided under the UNDP electoral assistance project, was also essential to assist the National Electoral Commission in accomplishing its mandate of supervising the electoral process. UNMIT police provided security for all phases of the electoral process and monitored the delivery and storage of ballots until the final count was calculated. The electoral activities were supported by the participation of 250 United Nations volunteers. Some 2,400 domestic observers and 489 international observers hailed the electoral process as peaceful, orderly and credible. UNMIT continues to provide advice on establishing the archives and capacity-building activities of the National Electoral Commission over the short- and medium-term period.

Highlights of electoral assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme

12. UNDP assistance aims to ensure that countries have the ability to organize future elections with little or no external help. It can take myriad forms, helping electoral authorities prepare for the conduct of a specific electoral event, supporting civic and voter education programmes, building the long-term capacity of

institutions as diverse as the media or police forces and providing capacity-building support to political parties. Increasingly, a good deal of technical assistance is also targeted at electoral management bodies in the inter-election period.

Cambodia

13. UNDP is implementing a project on strengthening democracy and electoral processes in Cambodia following previous electoral assistance to Cambodia. The project addresses the inter-election period, 2003 to 2007, in preparation for the 2007 elections for the Commune Council and the 2008 elections for the National Assembly. The project focuses on capacity-building of the election commission, enhancing the legal framework and promoting civic engagement.

Malawi

14. UNDP assisted in the multi-party democratic parliamentary and presidential elections conducted in May 2004. In 2005, UNDP launched a project intended to provide long-term technical assistance to the Malawi Electoral Commission for the management and implementation of elections and electoral reform. The project is designed to build the institutional capacity of the Commission to hold credible local government elections in 2006 and general elections in 2009.

Mauritania

15. The Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP established an Electoral Assistance secretariat to assist with a referendum on constitutional revision (June 2006), legislative and local elections (November 2006), senatorial elections (January 2007) and two rounds of presidential elections (March 2007). Joint missions by the Department of Political Affairs, the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP were dispatched to the country prior, during and after the elections in order to assess the country's needs in the field of elections and the quality of United Nations assistance for the entire electoral cycle.

United Republic of Tanzania

16. Following a project to support the 2005 national elections in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNDP has begun to implement a comprehensive "deepening democracy" programme, which supports greater involvement of civil society, political parties and the media in electoral processes and institutions.

Yemen

17. From 2004 to 2006, UNDP implemented a capacity-building project for the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum and provided support for the presidential and local council elections in 2006. This was the second phase of the long-term support provided by UNDP to the electoral management body.